UNITED NATIONS **E**

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/2002/5
16 May 2002

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on the Promotion and
Protection of Human Rights
Working Group on Indigenous Populations
Twentieth session
22-26 July 2002
Item 7 of the provisional agenda

INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, INCLUDING INFORMATION RELATING TO THE VOLUNTARY FUND FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE AND THE REPORT OF THE ADVISORY GROUP

Indigenous Media Dialogue: "The role of the media in combating discrimination against indigenous peoples", held in Durban, South Africa, during the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, 2001

Note by the secretariat

1. In response to the previous media workshops and in particular to the recommendations arising from the New York workshop in December 2000, the Indigenous Team of the Right to Development Branch in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) decided to hold an Indigenous Media Dialogue during the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001.

2. The New York Workshop recommended that the World Conference include in its programme of action a recommendation that a symposium on the role of the media in combating discrimination against indigenous peoples be organized in cooperation with indigenous peoples and the mainstream press as a follow-up to the Conference. The Workshop also recommended that the Department of Public Information invite indigenous journalists and film-makers from the various regions to attend the World Conference and file stories for use worldwide.

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3. In response to those recommendations the Indigenous Media Dialogue focused on the role of the media in combating discrimination against indigenous peoples and examined, in particular, strategies to strengthen indigenous media and strategies to improve the coverage of indigenous issues by mainstream media.

Recommendations and strategies emerging from the Indigenous Media Dialogue

4. Education and training emerged as one of the chief strategies for strengthening indigenous media and for improving the coverage of indigenous issues by the mainstream media. The main issues with respect to such an education and training strategy are those of "access" and of "culturally appropriate education". This strategy includes the education and training of indigenous journalists but also encompasses the education and training (cross-cultural communication) of mainstream journalists about indigenous peoples and issues and ethical work conduct in regard to reporting on indigenous peoples and issues. It was stressed that the training of members of the non-indigenous media should ideally be done by indigenous people. Indigenous journalists spoke of the need to increase career prospects and opportunities to ensure that career pathways were established for indigenous people working in the media industry. Indigenous journalists also expressed their belief that they should have the opportunity to be editors.

> **Possible action: OHCHR could investigate the opportunities currently existing for the training, education and financial support of indigenous people wishing to pursue media careers.**

5. The indigenous journalists spoke of the need to be pro-active in approaching the mainstream media and in raising the profile of indigenous issues. This included investigating opportunities to "talk to the unconverted", including those members of the public who are not familiar with indigenous issues.

> **Possible action: Indigenous journalists suggested that individual journalists should approach and strengthen ties with the mainstream media and actively seek opportunities to reach out to the "unconverted".**

6. The personal safety of indigenous journalists was a chief concern of the indigenous journalists. A strategy proposed to increase the safety and support of indigenous journalists included a recommendation for the establishment of an international indigenous journalists' network under the umbrella of the International Association of Journalists. This would allow for the development of closer ties with mainstream media and would attract the support of the larger organization. It would also provide support to indigenous journalists now offered to mainstream journalists, such as free legal counsel for work-related matters. The strategy would also increase networking between diverse groups of indigenous peoples working in the area of the media and mass communication.

Possible action: OHCHR could facilitate a meeting between indigenous media representatives and the International Association of Journalists to promote the establishment of an international indigenous journalists' network under the umbrella of the Association.

7. The development in collaboration with indigenous journalists of an international code of ethics for people working with indigenous peoples and their issues was recommended as a useful strategy to ensure better quality coverage of indigenous peoples and issues, in a more sensitive and culturally appropriate fashion.

Possible Action: Using the legal expertise within OHCHR and documents that have been developed at the national level by some Governments, a document could be drafted to stimulate the development (by indigenous media workers) of a code of ethics for media personnel working with or on indigenous issues.

8. Cultural rights, such as the right to one's own language, were linked by participants in the Indigenous Media Dialogue to respect for diversity, protection of Indigenous traditional knowledge and sufficient provision of resources to indigenous peoples and their media to promote indigenous language use.

Possible action: The development of an effective code of ethics would do much to ensure that proper respect is afforded to the rights of indigenous peoples. Also, lobbying of States through an indigenous media network and the International Association of Journalists could assist the better resourcing of indigenous media and indigenous language use. Strategies such as affirmative action might be useful for promoting indigenous media and career pathways.

9. The indigenous journalists recommended strengthening ties with the mainstream media and exploring and including new media (and technologies) in education and training and in career development pathways.

Possible action: The establishment of an international network for indigenous journalists under the umbrella of the International Association of Journalists was proposed by indigenous media workers as a possible strategy to strengthen ties with the mainstream media.